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BANDITS ACTIVE IN THAI BORDER AREAS;
POLICE SEIZE ILLEGAL WEAPONS AND OPIUM

[Comment: Bandit activity, as reported in the January Thai press, was confined chiefly to the border provinces of Songkhla and Narathiwat in the south, Chantaburi in the southeast, and Surin and Nakhon Phanom in the east.

Police reported several cases of illegal traffic in guns and opium.

Numbers in parentheses refer to appended sources.]

Joint Thai-Malay Suppression Force

In mid-January, Prachathipatai published a special dispatch from its correspondent in Songkhla concerning the cooperation between Thailand and Malaya in destroying bandits on their common border. The article stated that in December the Malay police had requested the services of Thai Police Major Wichit Laksanawet, on duty with the Suppression Unit at Region I, to help formulate a plan for the control of Chinese guerrillas who had fled into Thailand. This plan called for the strategy of encirclement and was carried out with the assistance of Police Lieutenant Colonel Anthaphon Suyaphot of Region IX and his police force. According to this article, the pincers movement used was effective in destroying a number of bandits.(1)

Quoting a 12 January BBC broadcast, Si Krung reported that a joint Thai-Malay force of 1,000 men took part in this action and that Thai police from Bangkok, Songkhla, Hat Yai, and Sadao participated in the 12-day sweep that crossed the Thai border at Ban Prik.(2)

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Both Si Krung and Siam Nikon carried an announcement of the Ministry of Interior to the effect that a Chinese bandit, Liu Yung-chuan, had surrendered in December to district officials in Narathiwat Province. Liu was said to have turned over one Sten gun, 50 rounds of ammunition, 2 magazines, one hand grenade, one knife, and various documents that were in his possession. He was held for investigation. (2, 3)

Bandits armed with guns and knives attacked villagers in Chantaburi Province, according to the 17 January issue of Siam Nikon. Local officials and police captured four men, confiscated their weapons, and recovered the stolen goods. (4)

Early in the month, in Surin Province, bandits stole a locomotive at Lam Chi Station on the Bangkok-Ubon Line and drove it through Surin Station, where the station master's signal failed to stop it. Abandoning the locomotive beyond Surin, the thieves escaped into the forest, according to the Si Krung. The return of the stolen locomotive to Lam Chi Station delayed the Ubon Bangkok Express for several hours. (5)

Thammatipat featured a front page article, late in January, concerning the activity of bandits in Nakhon Phanom Province. This article called them "two-area bandits," because the gang crossed and recrossed the Khong River between Thailand and Indochina, and gave the following report of their activities.

"The bandits arrogantly announced in advance the place that they intended to rob and threatened the police. At Bang Kwang Commune, in Muang Nakhon Phanom Amphoe, a police lieutenant and local officials with 20 members of the police met the gang and fought for 15 minutes. The bandits separated into two groups and fled, one group going to Sakon Nakhon and the other group trying to cross the Khong River to Savannakhet Province in Indochina. The latter were driven back to the Thai bank by Indochinese officers. "Later, a report from Mukdahan Amphoe said that three bandits were plundering villages along the Thai bank of the river. The police organized a force of company officials, deputies, village elders, and police, and proceeded by boat down the river to Ban Don Tan, where a police captain and four men went ashore. When a boat with three men approached from the north and did not respond to the officers' challenge, both sides opened fire. After a short fight two men in the police party were wounded. The bandits turned their boat back and escaped. However, they were identified as men of the 'two-area gang' and as those responsible for the Mukdahan trouble. (6)

Illegal Guns and Opium Seized

The method used in one instance by the Suppression Division of the Police Department to capture soldiers who tried to sell weapons, was described in the 14 January issue of the Siam Nikon. Police Major Thanom Hongthong, in charge of the Suppression Unit at Central Headquarters, impersonating a buyer of guns, negotiated with two army sergeants for the purchase of carbines and ammunition to be delivered at a designated place on the Phetchaburi road. The police arrested the soldiers when they came to hand over 5 carbines, 140 rounds of ammunition, 6 magazines, and one gun. (7)

The discovery of a cache of illegal guns was reported in Siam Nikon of 17 January. When police of Nakhon Phanom Province went to investigate a reported burglary at a gun shop, they found hidden there more than ten carbines, which allegedly had been stolen, and illegal ammunition for Sten machine carbines.

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Another article of the same issue of Siam Nikon reported the confiscation of three sacks of raw opium at Bang Sue Station in Bangkok. According to the article, the authorities believe that the opium was brought by train from the north and then hidden in the station toilet until it could be removed with safety. The officers arrested some men who seemed to have been left to guard the illegal opium.(4)

Bangkok railroad police, acting on a tip about opium shipments on the Chiang Mai-Bangkok Express, inspected the freight warehouse and became suspicious of oxygen cylinders that seemed too heavy, according to a report in Si Krung on 23 January. When no one claimed the freight after 4 days, the officials examined the cylinders and found 40 kilograms of raw opium, worth 140,000 baht. They held the consignee for investigation.(8)

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1. Prachatnipatai, 16 Jan 53
2. Si Krung, 16 Jan 53
3. Siam Nikon, 16 Jan 53
4. Siam Nikon, 17 Jan 53
5. Si Krung, 6 Jan 53
6. Thammathipat, 24 Jan 53
7. Siam Nikon, 14 Jan 53
8. Si Krung, 23 Jan 53

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